J. Edwin Odgers.

THE

SPIRITUAL VALUE

OF

LIBERAL RELIGION,

BY

JAMES DRUMMOND, B.A.

An Address

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION

OF

MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE,

October 3rd, 1870.

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JOHNSON AND RAWSON, PRINTERS, 89, MARKET STREET.
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It has become a hackneyed expression to say that we live in an age of extraordinary intellectual and religious movement. Men, from their varying points of view, are watching this movement with feelings of alarm or of hope, and endeavouring to forecast the future by interpreting the signs of the present. It is, however, a matter of extreme difficulty to decide, with any well-grounded confidence, whither our world is tending; for our habit of forming small and practically exclusive aggregations of sympathetic minds both colours our view and contracts its range, and it seems to the members of each sect a kind of natural necessity that mankind should ultimately come round to those modes of thought which are so satisfying to themselves, and which, by being constantly presented to them, form the solid ground of their intellectual universe, while all beyond appears the misty dwelling of eccentric or uninstructed spirits. With an innate weakness, to be corrected only by the humility of a disciplined understanding, they fancy that they are above the shifting currents, and each forgets that he no less than others is within the troubled stream of human thought, subject to its local variations, borne along by its uncertain flow, and feeling all the more secure and peaceful the more passively he drifts. Would we place ourselves in the most favourable position for the discovery of truth, we must first endeavour to ascertain whether we are carried by the permanent onward flood of human faith, or by one of its many backward or transverse

eddies, or are wildly rushing down some lateral channel, to end only in a solitary stagnation.

To attempt, at present, any estimate of the various schools of religious opinion would carry us far beyond our prescribed limits; but underlying all theological thought there is a preliminary question, the opposite answers to which mark two contrasted tendencies, which in our day are hastening towards logical completeness, and the spiritual value of which it is a matter of the highest importance to determine. The question to which I refer relates to the rights of the human mind in the province of religious inquiry, and the two tendencies which thence result are towards what may be described as authoritative and as liberal religion.

An authoritative religion is that in which all the great problems concerning the human soul are decided, once and for ever, by an authority external to the individual mind. Such a system admits the lawfulness of inquiry to those who are outside its pale, but only that they may examine and accept its credentials. Their competence to pronounce an opinion on any subject decided by the recognised authority is not allowed; and the permitted investigation of the credentials is not free, for to arrive at any but one conclusion is regarded as a sure sign either of criminal self-confidence or of intellectual perversity. Within the system, inquiry moves in narrowly-defined limits, being suffered to prove, but not to call in question, any of the established dogmas.

Liberal religion is that which admits without restriction the right of inquiry, and which professes to judge men's theological competence by their learning, their faithfulness, and their intellectual and spiritual gifts, and not by the outward shaping of their creed. From the nature of the case, it has no formal dogmatic conclusions. It has no necessary connection either with Unitarianism or with what are sometimes called "advanced opinions"; and to identify it with these is to be unjust towards the free minds which do not accept these particular types of theology, and to set up a new orthodoxy, which is all the more dangerous and misleading because bearing the mask of freedom. Yet in say-

ing that liberal religion has no formal dogmatic conclusions, it is not meant that liberal theologians are individually without definite convictions, or are indifferent to the clear statement of theological truth, any more than the freedom of science implies on the part of scientific men an indifference to the correct expression of natural laws. It is precisely the energy of individual conviction which renders impossible a corporate uniformity; and it might rather be said that the advocates of a dogmatic system are indifferent to theological truth, the interests of which they sacrifice to the idol of sectarian strength.

Of these two phases of religion, the liberal may more properly than the authoritative be spoken of as a tendency; for authoritative religion has existed from the earliest times, has developed its resources with the greatest completeness, and can hardly be expected to produce any higher results in the human soul than it has already exhibited, while the movement of some minds in this direction from a position apparently more liberal is properly spoken of as reactionary, and cannot be regarded as a manifestation of any new forces in the depths of our nature. Liberal religion, on the other hand, while in individual cases it has proved an incalculable energy, has never had an opportunity of showing its effect when frankly accepted by a great community, and its inauguration as the basis of our national religious life would be the wholly new result of a tendency which has slowly formed itself in the human mind, which during the last few centuries has been consolidating its power, and is now pressing on with unexampled confidence to victory. In this stream of liberal tendency we find ourselves here; for the supporters of our College have from the first refused to pledge either Professors or Students to any foregone conclusions, and have consecrated their means, not to promote the narrow interests of a sect, but to advance theological truth. We meet here, accordingly, not as the members of a denomination or as agreed in our opinions, but as men who love truth, and are prepared to follow whithersoever the Spirit of God, dimly or clearly revealed through study, and thought,

and prayer, may lead each seeking soul. Are we, then, in thus acting, committing ourselves to a wanton and fearful venture, or engaged in a work of high religious trust? Are we, as the advocates of authority would say, coldly and remorselessly digging the grave of human hopes, or endeavouring to bring in a new creation for the enfranchised children of God?

In endeavouring to ascertain the spiritual value of our liberal position, we may notice, first, a few of its more general aspects.

Liberal religion tends to produce a larger and deeper life than the authoritative. This appears to follow from the fact that its characteristic aim is to develop individual resources. It expects each mind to think with energy, to labour with clear consciousness of inwardly-revealed duty, and to worship with the immediate communion of a filial devoutness. It thus leaves room for the full development of men's various gifts, and instead of cutting the free luxuriance of nature into one uniform shape, it would enrich it with the fertilising influences of a holy culture, and then leave it to its spontaneous growth. It is true that the results of this method present some features which are not satisfactory to a superficial observer. There are no organised movements of compact masses of men confederated into a disciplined Church, and there are consequently no imposing demonstrations of ecclesiastical strength. Liberal religion, it must be admitted, is ecclesiastically weak. It has no statistics of the number of its votaries, and convenes no councils to impose decrees upon obedient millions. But is this a defect? Are we to admit that the absence of sectarian cohesion proves the poverty of our religious life, and to forget that such cohesion can be secured only by the sacrifice of some of the noblest elements of life? Men have too long confounded Church life with religious life. We must learn that the former is only one product, and not the most important product, of the latter. Ecclesiasticism, forgetting its subordination and claiming an independent power, has too often overshadowed and choked religion, creating artificial virtues and imaginary sins, but

passing by justice and the love of God. To judge of the religious life of a people you must visit not only their churches, but all their places of resort, not forgetting the secret chamber; and that is the most living religion which can count the largest proportion of high-minded and faithful men, whose powers are consecrated to a holy service, and who do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. Leaving the conventional estimates of the sects, liberal religion may claim for itself the deepest life of all the ages.

Again, liberal religion has more faith than the authoritative. This statement is opposed to what is, perhaps, the general opinion. But is not the general opinion grounded upon a very narrow conception of the meaning of faith? Liberal theology does, indeed, rest with less confidence in particular conclusions, and in its gradual separation from many ancient hypotheses inevitably presents a somewhat chaotic appearance. But it is this very chaos that brings to light its hidden faith. While cries of terror resound from the citadels of authority, and those who profess to have an immovable throne of infallibility tremble before the encroaching tide, liberal thought moves calmly upon the troubled waters, not doubting that those who look towards the light of God shall reach at last a haven of rest. It lays the ban on no subject of investigation. It does not fear that each fresh inquiry may drag religion in the dust. It has no dread that any great human interest may suffer from a criticism which loves truth better than tradition. It is content to follow God through ways unknown, and to leave in his hands the issue of each faithful endeavour. This kind of faith is doubtless much less effective for ecclesiastical purposes than that which consists in the acceptance of a dogmatic system; but it is not less effective in serving the true ends of religion—the reconciliation of man to God and of man to man, the cultivation of a spiritual worship, the destruction of evil in the human heart, the forming of the unshaped rudeness of nature into a heavenly image, the establishment of justice in social institutions and international policy; in a word, the promotion of God's kingdom

upon earth. It is time to protest in the injured name of religion against applying the word "Faith" to that reliance on a system which has so often proved itself compatible with the indulgence of the darkest passions, or that ignorant self-assurance concealed in whose heart is a distrustful and vindictive alarm.

Again, liberal religion ought to appeal to the world with greater spiritual power; because under it a man must speak, not what he may have learned by rote from another, not timidly keeping within the appointed lines of thought, but from the deepest life of his own soul, in words made penetrating by the force of individual conviction, and glowing with the clear light of an impartial intellect. This power, although it has given many distinguished tokens of its existence, has not hitherto been as conspicuous as, I believe, it is destined to be in the future. Liberal preachers have often been reproached with coldness, and it has not been generally to them that the hungry soul has turned for support and sympathy. This is due, not to the nature of freedom, but to the fact that the strength of Liberal Christians has been so largely spent in a fight for mere existence, in an endeavour to secure the privilege of making, without molestation, an honest profession of belief. The movement hitherto has been, in its outward aspects, more intellectual than spiritual, a claim on behalf of reason rather than the soul; and its appeal, accordingly, has been couched in the elaborate phraseology of the cultured understanding rather than the simple speech of the unlettered heart. In fulfilling a special function it has been compelled to pay less attention to the general work of all branches of the Church, and amid the abstractions of study has sometimes forgotten the way to the sinful, the suffering, and the ignorant. But the time is come when, not here and there, but wherever a liberal faith is professed, enthusiasm controlled by reason, wisdom fired by devotion, should exert their subduing power, and the voice of tenderness and sympathy, as between brother and brother, reach more solemn depths than the voice of official authority. When every faculty, richly

cultured, works freely under the direction of an unselfish purpose, the word of religion will be armed once more with power, and will call men from their hollow conventional trusts to a living communion with God.

Once more, liberal religion holds out a greater hope of unity than the authoritative. Unity has been almost the idol of authoritative religion. Schism is a sin of special ecclesiastical creation. The violator of unity has been deemed more infamous than the thief or the murderer, and doomed to more horrible punishment. But this policy, the track of which through history is marked with blood, has led to the disruption of Christendom, and arrayed the professed followers of Christ in fierce opposition, contending which of them shall be accounted greatest. If the spirit of meekness is gradually assuaging ecclesiastical ferocity, if humility is becoming a virtue in which men are to clothe themselves instead of haughtily thrusting it on opponents, if religious parties are beginning to respect one another's rights, and to conceive it possible that God may have many messages to the human soul, it is due to the influence of liberal thought. Under its leading, men are gradually discovering what the great mind of Paul announced ages ago, that there is a unity of the spirit which lies immeasurably deeper than unity of organisation, and that the only criminal schism springs from the love of supremacy. The sectarian endeavour to secure an all-dominating power is the great apostasy which has shivered the Church into fragments; reverent regard for one another's faithfulness, and the abnegation of personal and party claims, are leading us back and uniting us in a divine fellowship. And when liberal religion has wrought its perfect work, we shall meet one another as children of the same God, and suffer no more the uncertainties of the intellect to break the communion of the Spirit.

Nor will this unity be only a picture in the imagination, but will produce great practical results. Then, for the first time, good men will be able to unite their forces against the world's evil, and the Church's hostile and dissevered hosts will battle side by side for the one kingdom of God. Organ-

isations which rested on the principle of exclusion have given rise to inevitable dissent, and have met to discuss far other questions than the welfare of mankind. The minority, who have lifted their voices on behalf of liberty, that they might be able without compromise to co-operate in good works, and to bring the united efforts of all classes of religious men to bear upon the people's sin and misery, have been cried down as disturbers of the peace; but in truth the exclusiveness of majorities is the mother of division, with all its calamitous reults of hot discussion and enfeebled action; and the protest in favour of liberty and brotherhood, grounded as it is on the eternal rights of the human soul, must maintain itself through all revilings till even the last limiting name be blotted from the charter of our religious freedom. Already the efforts of benevolence are pushing sectarianism aside, and men of the most opposite tendencies of thought meet as friends in the same service of mankind; and the time will surely come when the emancipated Church of the children of God, rising to the greatness of its destiny, will address itself to its world-wide labours with undivided strength.

Theology, too, will move from its dim antagonisms towards the light of a higher unity. For if we see at present but faint signs of doctrinal agreement, still there can be no doubt that the faculties of the human mind, when freely and powerfully directed to the subject of religion, are far more likely to arrive at such agreement than a system of authority, which struggles in vain to block the channels of thought, and, succeeding only in breaking the stream into erratic courses, tends to produce an endless diversity of opinion. The compact unity, indeed, which Romanist theologians love, is, perhaps, not possible in a science which rests so largely on the infinitely various experiences of human souls; but the tendency of faithful investigation must be towards the unity of truth, and the day may yet dawn when the inevitable variations of partial knowledge shall pass away, and men, knowing as they are known, shall see the full-orbed light.

Such are a few of the more general spiritual advantages possessed by liberal religion. If from these we turn to

contemplate particular results, we may seem to depart from the position formerly laid down, that liberal religion has no settled dogmatic conclusions. Without, however, entering into precise doctrinal definitions, which might give rise to difference of opinion, we may notice certain tendencies of thought which appear to be more or less distinctive of liberal theology.

Before considering in detail a few of these tendencies, it may be remarked that their general characteristic is the removal of artificiality from religious conceptions, and the introduction of greater freshness and naturalness. They do not start from abstruse metaphysical speculations, difficult to understand, and more difficult to prove, but from the permanent facts of the human soul, which disclose themselves in the consciousness of the devout. They do not move towards an elaborately contrived representation of supra-mundane policy, which it is hard to bring into any clear connection with daily life, and the awful importance of which will only become manifest on the day of doom; but they seek to interpret relations between the soul and God which exist unchangeably, and whose interest has not to wait upon the great crisis beyond the grave. They do not describe the most essential requirements of religion as the arbitrary and often unintelligible enactments of sheer omnipotence, but present its laws as the expression of eternal Reason and Goodness, and finding a response, therefore, in the highest reason and purest goodness of the human mind. Accordingly they make religion more immediately interesting to the heart, intertwining it indissolubly with the affairs of the present life, bringing it home to every man as his personal concern, and viewing it as part and parcel of the great progressive movement of mankind, with natural historic place, and inward forces demanding as distinct an estimate as the skill of generals or the ambition of statesmen.

We may now observe more closely a few of those tendencies which seem destined to leave their impress deep in the theology of the future.

There is a growing reverence for the human soul. It is no longer an object for ecclesiastical disposal, deriving an adventitious grandeur from the drama supposed to be enacted in another world, but possessing little intrinsic worth, and treated with coldest contempt when refusing to move within the charmed circle of some dominant power. It is valued for what it is—for its unfathomed capabilities, its far-reaching aspirations, its deep affections, its clinging faith, its great responsibilities. It is viewed, with all its imperfections, as the truest temple of God, where his clearest revelations are given, and the brightest flashes from his Spirit gleam. It is thought to require no mean interpreter, this immortal soul, hiding such depths of mystery, and still disclosing wonders ever new to our searching insight. Old ecclesiastical classifications are breaking down before this new reverence. Spiritual sympathies, passing behind the outward distinctions of opinion and ceremony, overleap the separating barriers. Men's souls are finding one another out, and through the mutual recognition of a common life are becoming convinced that the most astute of sects has not succeeded in appropriating God. Perhaps never before in the world's history was man, as man, so deeply valued, and justice so freely accorded on the ground of ineradicable human rights.

Hence arises an increasing conviction of the essential evil of sin, and a deepening faith in goodness. Our view is not contingent on the dim events of the future, or the portentous transactions of the distant past: it is grounded upon present facts, and makes its way to the mind, not through theological conceptions, but through our spiritual sensibilities. Sin is the defilement of a soul created for righteousness, the prostitution of sacred powers to unworthy ends. Goodness is an abiding spirit of purity, and love, and self-consecration. The one is intrinsically hateful, the other intrinsically admirable. There is accordingly a growing disposition to dwell upon the evil of sin considered in itself, rather than on the torments which await it. Men are taught to shrink from sin as from the breath of a pestilence. The saving of souls assumes a

more solemn meaning. It is not to snatch men by theological artifice from the grip of Divine justice, but to overthrow the tyranny of their evil passions and rebellious wills, and bring them subdued and penitent to the Father whose love they have despised. It is not to clothe them in the conventional garb of any Church, but to arouse their slumbering spiritual forces and establish the reign of goodness in their hearts.

Turning to the tendencies of thought in regard to God, we may trace a deeper desire to enter through communion into his Spirit than to produce agreement as to the mode of his existence. Men are ceasing to believe that the salvation of souls can depend upon accepting the subtleties of a speculative philosophy, and those who have not been trained in the hard discipline of a dogmatic system are unable to recognise in the *Quicunque vult*, be it true or be it false, a summary of Christ's teaching about God. A creed deemed "before all things" necessary to salvation, which presents a doctrine of God composed exclusively of clauses addressed to our intellectual apprehension, from which we cannot learn whether God is good, holy, just, loving, or indeed has any character at all, and which is almost equally bald, hard, and cold in its representation of Christ, for the spirit of whose life it has not one word of sympathy, reverence, or even recognition,—such a creed may be taken as an extreme type of that theology which considers human welfare dependent on the imposition of forms of thought by a divinely commissioned authority. The human soul is turning with unsatisfied hunger from these stones, and asking questions that come far nearer to the roots of our life. What is the character of God? In what relation does he stand to our souls? How does he look upon our sin, our error, our weakness, our sorrow? Is he near us or far off? How and what can we know of his purposes? Can we trust him, rest in him, pray to him? Such questions as these, coming, as they do, close to our daily life, possess an absorbing interest, and theology must find satisfying answers, supported by their appropriate evidence.

Similarly, men are seeking for a Christ dearer to the heart than the being whose nature is defined with such hard outlines in the creeds, and whom, it will not perhaps be too much to say, we do not seem either to know better or to love more after the most attentive perusal of these theological summaries. Whether or not with any conscious departure from ancient standards of thought, liberal theologians are assigning to Christ a more natural, and therefore more divine, place in the history of the world, are gathering round him a deeper human interest, and are dwelling more on his character and thought than on his position and offices. They are unfolding the story of a real human life, sympathising with real temptations, grasping purposes which have impressed themselves indelibly upon the world, entering into spiritual experiences which reveal a law of life for all time, and interpreting sorrows which find an echo in saintly and devoted hearts. Doubtless, many have accepted with all sincerity the theologians' Christ, and have believed their love to him to be bound up with all the difficulties of complicated definitions of his person; but to how many has Christ become, through these definitions, a mere abstraction, and lost all hold upon the inward springs of life; and how often has his spirit been crucified afresh while angry or supercilious partisans have striven to prove their discipleship by an exact description of his person! But now he ceases to be a prop for theological vestments, and comes before us as God's "beloved Son," "full of grace and truth," captivating us by the purity of his purpose, the simple majesty of his thought, the lowliness of his submission, the unconquerable power of his faith, the delicacy of his insight, the tenderness of his sympathy, the self-forgetfulness of his love; and if in the past the Church's dogma of his person has ruled the intellect of man, he himself, I venture to think, will in time to come rule the heart, and inspire it with a diviner life than the Church has ever dreamed of.

Passing on to the Scriptures, so universally venerated among Christians, we may observe that a vast change of opinion is taking place in regard to their origin and function.

This change is not unnaturally esteemed by those who adhere to the old belief as an attack upon their authority, and an attempt to depreciate their value; but those who are in the midst of the movement feel that a veil is being lifted from their eyes, and flashes of light are breaking in and disclosing depths of spiritual wisdom which had lain concealed in the mists of an erroneous hypothesis. On all sides the dogma of the Bible's infallibility is giving way, and that wonderful literature is rescued from the position to which a mistaken reverence had consigned it. No longer the miraculous book, before which the clearest evidence of science must own itself mistaken, and which must crush with its dead weight all the original springs of spiritual life, it is the varied expression of the soul's communion with God, told in conformity with the laws of human thought and culture, and affording therefore inestimable help to the religious heart, while leaving its freedom unimpaired. The inspiration of its writers is not viewed as an unknown and arbitrary action of the Holy Spirit, out of all relation to elevated character and pious insight, but takes its place among the permanent forces by which the life of man is swayed, and finds its truest witness and interpretation in the devout and prayerful soul. The mingling of human imperfection, even the fiery glow of human passion, give no more distress; for we have learned that even Apostles "see through a glass, darkly," and that God says many things to those who have not explored the whole field of knowledge, and even to those who blend with the breathings of his Spirit the pitiless vehemence of the warrior or the national pride of the patriot. And those deeper passages which reveal the abiding laws of spiritual communion yield to the touch of a more appreciative interpretation, and deliver up treasures of wisdom long hidden from the theological scribe. Thus the dull sameness of an infallible Bible breaks into infinitely varied parts, each with a peculiar interest of its own; and the equal value of all verses, which might be taken at random, and arranged in any desired juxta-position, without

regard to literary taste, intelligent exegesis, or religious insight, makes way for development and subordination, so that the passages of highest importance, hitherto insufficiently esteemed, may be selected with spiritual discrimination, and placed with due prominence before the attention. By this process the Scriptures are restored to their rightful place in our affections, and our reverence for those who spake in old time as they were moved by the Holy Spirit loses none of its depth, while becoming more enlightened and sympathetic.

This view of the Bible is leading to even wider and less expected results. The discovery that a religion may quicken, elevate, and console the mind, though its sources are not infallible, has changed the point of view from which we regard other religions, and enables us to study them with candour and sympathy. They are no longer examined as mere dark masses of human absurdity and guilt, with a view to foster our own self-complacency or create an artificial gratitude. Amid the heavy clouds of heathenism streaks of light become apparent. High aspirations shape themselves, fantastically it may be, but still grandly, in the gloom. Precepts of pure morality invite our attention, and the influence of great souls shines from distant ages and lands. And turning to the sadder side of the picture we find a strange parallelism of what may seem to be superstitions running through the historical development of Christianity itself; we observe its pure spirituality only here and there, and we have to distinguish between the Christianity of the soul and the trappings with which the sects have dressed it into a likeness of heathenism. We can no longer, therefore, divide religions into the one true and the many false, but rather see in all the light struggling with the uncomprehending darkness. In some indeed the darkness is very gross; in one, as I believe, the light shines, though amid human conditions, with such clearness and power that it will one day illumine the world. But we cannot say, God is here, there he has never been. We can trace his footsteps everywhere,

and feel that He has never left Himself without a witness. We must admit that his family is wider than any ecclesiastical appellation. This discovery should fill us with devout joy; for to any man who loves his kind no dogma can be more appalling than that which declares that God's favour rests upon one solitary Church, and that beyond its precincts there is nothing but the desert of heathenism, savagely nurturing its millions for eternal flames. Liberal religion has rolled away this dreadful incubus; and already there are some signs that the old classifications shall crumble to pieces, and the sectarian Christanity of the Churches at last make way for the kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ.

This rapid survey may help to impress upon our minds the importance of the work in which we are engaged at this College, and suggests to us a two-fold direction for our efforts.

On the one hand, the acquisition of learning on a broad and comprehensive basis must occupy our attention. Theology no longer stands still, but is full of the life and movement which characterise other sciences; and he who would address himself intelligently to the problems of the day, and meet successfully the difficulties and doubts which beset, not the frivolous, but the earnest and the thoughtful, must be furnished with rich stores of knowledge, and with an understanding trained in the vigorous and manly exercise of its powers. And even in regard to the weekly ministrations of the pulpit, although the direct introduction of learned topics is seldom required, nevertheless that breadth of view and largeness of sympathy, that variety of treatment and precision of thought, that elevated wisdom and just application of religious principles to the questions of the day, which our age demands, can be secured only by generous and prolonged intellectual culture.

On the other hand, it is of even higher importance that the spiritual culture should be large and deep. Intellectual training supplies an instrument of great power; but it accomplishes no fruitful work in the Christian ministry unless

it draws its inspiration from a devoted will, a pure and loving heart, and a soul which, knowing by its own experience, needs not that any should tell it what is in man. The preacher of a free Gospel cannot fall back upon the commonplaces of an established system, or hide his inward poverty behind the deceiving cloak of a set phraseology. He must speak as a man to his brother men on subjects at once of infinite concern and of pressing and daily importance. He must speak what he thinks, what he feels, in words that burn because they have been lighted at the altar of sacrifice, in tones that go to the soul because they have come from the soul. He must plead for all that is noble, just, and true, with the power of a single mind, which has forgotten self, and lost both its timidity and its ambition in the communion of prayer. And in his visits as a pastor he may not assume the superior air of a functionary, or imagine that he can do his duty in the time of sickness or death by going through prescribed forms or dictating articles of belief, but must bear to the poorest home the wealth of a living sympathy and a tender brotherly reverence. His sole power for good lies in what he is. The trappings of authority have fallen off. No longer priest, or Pharisee, or scribe, he has become a lowly son of man, and he can bring the divine grace to his fellowmen, not through sacramental rite, but only through his own life in God.

Thus intellect and soul must unite in our preparation for the ministry. Learning and thought must give shape to the undefined aspirations of religion, and save them from degenerating into fanaticism, intolerance, or superstition; religion must kindle the light of holy service amid the dullest studies, turn to noblest ends the resources of learning, and moderate the scepticism of the intellect by keeping before it the irrepressible wants and ever-recurring experiences of the soul. In happy union, they supplement one another's deficiencies, and may bring to the work of human improvement the harmonious power of a full and rounded nature. Divorced, they wage an unprofitable war, and leave the way

open for ecclesiastical usurpation. Liberal religion is on its trial. Great hopes cluster round it. Will it prove adequate to the needs of a divine life in man? Let us wake to our responsibilities, and take up our labour once more with the confidence and with the humility of trust.

It is usual to append to this address a statement of the academic honours obtained during the past session by the students of the College. The list of university distinctions is smaller than the friends of the College could wish. At the first B.A. examination in July, Mr. Dendy Agate passed in the first division, and obtained honours in French. At the matriculation examination in June, Mr. P. V. Smith obtained honours. In the University College examinations Mr. Dendy Agate was awarded the fifth certificate in the Lower Senior Latin, and Mr. P. V. Smith gained a prize in the Junior Greek, and third certificate in the Junior Latin.

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By the same Author.

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